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# The long-term emotional adjustment of children of divorce: trust in intimate relationships.

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THE LONG-TERM EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCE:  
TRUST IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

A Thesis Presented

by

KATHRYN M. FRANKLIN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
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ABSTRACT

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TRUST IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

FEBRUARY 1989

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In this study we examined parental divorce as a psycho-social event similar to victimization. The long-term emotional adjustment of these children, now college-aged, was examined in the context of trust at three levels: generalized trust, interpersonal trust, and interpersonal trust in the context of marriage. We found that subjects whose parents had divorced did not differ from those whose parents were married on measures of general trust. However, subjects from the parental divorce group indicated less trust in both parents, regardless of who retained custody, and less trust between their parents. In their own intimate relationships, no differences in trust in a dating partner were reported; when placed in the context of marriage, however, subjects in the divorced group reported less trust in the dependability of their hypothetical spouse and less optimism toward the success of their marriages. Analyses by parental conflict instead of marital status revealed a more generalized negative view of trust; subjects from high conflict families expressed less trust in both the benevolence of the world and people, as well as

in their parents. The joint effects of divorce and parental conflict proved the most negative; subjects whose parents had divorced, but continued to experience high levels of conflict, reported decreased generalized trust, less trust in their parents, less trust within the context of marriage, and diminished optimism with regards to the success of their future dating relationships and marriage.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The spiralling divorce rate over the last three decades has led to increasing concern over the effects of parental divorce on the child. It is estimated that one-third of the children born today will experience the breakup of their parents' marriage (Glick, 1979) and although the prevalence of divorce has increased, the social stigma attached to the breakup of a marriage may not have waned (Tessman, 1978). Divorce is not a single, short-term event, but rather a process that may linger for years. It is an adjustment for every member of the family, not just the parents. For this reason, much research has concentrated on the adverse effects divorce may have on the child.

Divorce affects different aspects of a child's personal and social life, both in and outside the family. It is a time of uncertainty for the child, who may have many questions about both what has happened and what will happen in the future. The post-divorce family suffers through a period of disorganization. This may include relocation, requiring a change of schools for the child, new friends, in addition to coping with the loss of a parent. In many cases divorce also leads to a decrease in household income, forcing the custodial parent (most often the mother) to spend more time away from the home. Thus,

the child feels rejected by not only the parent who "left", but also by the one still at home. Often in the face of conflicting loyalties as parents compete for love and allegiance, many of the child's basic needs are threatened: physiological needs, a sense of security, the need to feel loved and to belong, and self-esteem needs (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

This disruption in the child's environment has been shown to affect the child, leading to higher rates of delinquency and anti-social behavior (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The reported number of children of divorce with psychiatric problems is nearly twice the rate of outpatient evaluation at children's psychiatric hospitals as would be expected from their representation in the general population (McDermott, 1970).

Typically, most research has focused on the effects of age and gender to better comprehend the impact of divorce. Older children often react angrily, blaming parents for disrupting their world, while younger children express guilt, as if they were somehow responsible for their parents' breakup (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). With varying ages come different needs, a different relationship with the parents, and a different level of cognitive development. Longfellow (1979) suggests that a child's age at the time of divorce influences how he or she cognitively

processes the situation, thus predicting the child's reaction.

Pre-schoolers (0-5 yrs.) suffer the most adverse, widespread effects of all the observed age groups. Children at this age regress behaviorally, are inhibited in play, and are more tearful, irritable, and aggressive (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Pre-schoolers fear being abandoned by the custodial parent and are acutely aware of all separations. Parental divorce while a child is young leads to impaired self-esteem as adolescents (Rosenberg, 1965), impairment in the development of basic trust (Santrock, 1970), and even impaired cognitive performance in junior and senior high school (Santrock, 1972).

Unlike pre-schoolers who react more behaviorally, children in the early school years (6-8 yrs.) react more emotionally to their parents' divorce. Clinicians report signs of moderate depression in these youngsters shortly after their parents' separation. A pervasive feeling of sadness and loss overwhelms seven and eight-year olds in particular. This disruption in the family structure leaves many of these children frightened and confused about their futures. These fears and anxieties can translate into problems in areas outside of the home. Thus, Ryker (1971) indicates that these children's academic performance is affected by the experience.

Children whose parents divorced while they were in the later school years (9-12 yrs.), as college students recall experiencing more difficulty adjusting to a post-divorce family than those subjects in the previous age groups (Landis, 1960). Although these children are best able to cognitively process the reasons for the divorce, they still express intense anger at one or both parents. In many cases these children consider one parent to have caused the divorce, while the other is merely a victim. Awareness of the causes of their parents' divorce, however, also makes these children more concerned about their own future marriages (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Although divorce affects both genders, most research concludes that male children are more adversely affected than female children, particularly in mother-headed, single-parent homes. Whereas females from divorced families are more overcontrolled and depressed than females from intact homes, males show more anti-social behavior, are more impulsive and less self-controlled, and are more rebellious towards authorities than their counterparts (Felner, Stolberg, & Cowan, 1975; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1979; Peterson & Zill, 1983). Slater, Stewart & Linn (1983), however, report that adolescent males from disrupted homes possess better self-concepts and perceptions of family environments than any other group. Adolescent females, on the other hand, express



significantly more precocious seductive behavior during adolescence and young adulthood (Hetherington, 1972; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

### Long-Term Consequences

Although most research acknowledges the impact of divorce at the time it occurs, few studies have defined the lasting effects of this disruption to the family. Hetherington et al. (1979) report that the effects of parental divorce peak at one year following the divorce, then diminish until they have almost disappeared by year two. The differences between children as a result of family structure are no longer present two years after the divorce, although some boys exhibit lingering effects. These findings lead to speculation as to whether any long-term consequences appear as these children mature. Children may adjust to parental divorce, but how do they cope in their own intimate relationships? In 1982, Greenberg & Nay found no differences in the quantity or quality of dating behavior, attitudes towards marriage or conflict resolution skills between subjects from intact or divorced homes. The only noted difference lay in children of divorce expressing a more favorable attitude towards divorce in general. In contrast, Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White (1984) reported heightened "courtship activity" amongst children of divorce, especially if there existed acrimony between the parents either during or after the

divorce, if parent-child relations had deteriorated, or if the custodial parent remained single. Satisfaction with heterosexual relations also declined if parent-child relations had eroded since the divorce.

In a cross-sectional study using national probability samples from 1957 and 1976, Kulka & Weingarten (1979) reported modest lingering effects for subjects whose parents divorced when the subjects were children. Young adults, aged 21 to 34, whose parents divorced before they were sixteen years of age, reported being significantly less likely to feel "very happy", an effect not present in the married subjects. All of these subjects were more likely to have gotten divorced themselves or to have never married at all. Males showed more generally widespread consequences, particularly in the 1957 sample. Kulka and Weingarten argued that children of divorce develop a more complex cognitive and affective view of the marital relationship, which allows them to perceive difficulties and tensions that would not be noticed otherwise.

Pooling eight national surveys from 1973 to 1982, Glenn (1985) found that both males and females from divorced families scored significantly lower than other groups on several factors of psychological well-being. These subjects were also more likely to be divorced themselves. Unlike Kulka & Weingarten (1979), however,

reports of happiness significantly differed between the groups in the older years as well.

### Evaluation

Unfortunately, much of the aforementioned research is confusing and unsystematic, suffering from both conceptual and methodological difficulties that make the reader question some of the reported findings. Many of the studies concern divorces that occurred over a quarter of a century ago. As the prevalence of divorce has increased, other attitudes in society may have changed; some of the authors' conclusions may be dated. Several of the "classic" studies concerning children of divorce based their findings on clinical research involving troubled children who had sought psychiatric assistance, thus challenging the generalizability of the results to other populations. These studies also rarely examine a control group. Few studies report the influence of socio-economic status. In one study, the discrepancy in the child's own divorce rate was substantially reduced after controlling for age and education (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979).

Even when ignoring the methodological weaknesses, many of the reported findings conflict with one another. Slater, Stewart & Linn (1983) indicate that males from divorced families have better self-concepts than anyone else, whereas all previous research claimed that boys were the most adversely affected by the experience (Felner,

Stolberg, & Cowan, 1975; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1979; Peterson & Zill, 1983). Age at time of divorce affected attitudes and performance in some studies, (Landis, 1960; Rosenberg, 1965; Santrock, 1970, 1972; Hetherington 1972), but failed to play a significant role in others (Roberts, 1986). Hetherington et al. (1979) traced the long-term consequences of divorce on children to no more than two years after the event, while others found significant lingering effects up to twenty years later (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Glenn, 1985). Recent research reported that emotional adjustment was related to family integration or perceived familial conflict, not parental marital status. Enos and Handal (1986) indicated that the child's psychological adjustment and satisfaction related to perceived conflict in the family, regardless of family structure. When controlling for parents' marital status, subjects who reported high family integration also had more positive attitudes towards marriage (Coleman & Ganong, 1984).

#### Theoretical Background

The most serious problem with the research in this area is its lack of theoretical grounding. Most experimenters interested in investigating the effect of divorce on children study verbal responses without considering how these responses were produced psychologically. If researchers were to consider instead the psychological

foundations, such as beliefs, the confusion could perhaps be minimized.

From a review of the literature, it appears that parental divorce alters a child's fundamental perceptions of the world. After a divorce, a child's basic notions concerning social reality, including the permanence of relationships, is shaken (Hess & Camera, 1979). Adolescents show diminished optimism regarding the future (Saucier & Ambert, 1982). Anecdotal evidence from clinical research suggests several prevailing themes in the children's experiences. In a divorce, the child is "confronted with a world which is suddenly less reliable, less predictable, and less likely in their view to provide for their needs and expectations. There is a heightened sense of vulnerability" and loss (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975). If divorce threatens a child's established environment, how does a child adapt to this new information?

#### World Assumptions

Recently, psychological research has renewed an interest in exploring the ways in which people cognitively interpret the environment. Kelly (1955) and Bruner (1957) were two of the first researchers to explore this issue through the concept of "mental constructs." They proposed that people develop "mental constructs" in order to effectively deal with and interpret an overabundance of information in the environment. Constructs are categories



or continua along which individuals measure or perceive stimuli. Experience determines the relevant constructs. As experiences between individuals differ, so do the constructs. One person may judge behavior along an Independence-dependence continuum, while another individual may view acts in terms of benevolent-malevolent behavior. Thus, an argument between two people may be judged by the first individual as a display of Independence, but interpreted as a sign of mean-spiritedness by the second individual.

Constructs are defined in terms of accessibility and availability. Most constructs are available to all individuals in that the concepts are present in memory, but a construct is only considered accessible if the individual readily employs it verbally. Most researchers conclude that individual differences in construct accessibility are due to experiences, family background or even verbal exposure to certain concepts (Higgins & King, 1981; Higgins, King, & Mavin, 1982). For instance, everyone may have an "attractiveness" construct, but only some may use it in an attempt to make sense of social stimuli. The more frequently a construct is activated, the more accessible it becomes and the longer the accessibility persists (Higgins & King, 1981). In forming impressions and recalling target information, people utilize more accessible than nonaccessible trait information, both shortly after

receiving the information and several weeks later (Higgins, King, & Mavin, 1982). Long-term, chronic construct accessibility influences the encoding of construct relevant input, even when the construct is not specifically activated by the environment (Bargh, Bond, Lombardi, & Tota, 1986).

Consistent with construct theory is Epstein's (1980) theory of cognitive self-concept. Epstein postulates that self-concept is a conceptual system that allows one to adapt to stimuli in the environment. The self-system is an organized hierarchy of major and minor postulates about the world and the self, which makes sense and brings order to the "otherwise chaotic world of experience" (p.102). This hierarchical system of postulates forms a theory about the world and the self in order to organize and explain personal experience. These assumptions are strongly held as they are derived from and confirmed by experience. A personal theory of reality assimilates the data of experience, maintains a favorable pleasure/pain balance, optimizes self-esteem, and maintains its organization in order to fulfill its other functions.

This theme of a personal interpretation of "reality" also underlies Janoff-Bulman's (1985, in press; Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983) research on victimization. Severely traumatic events, such as rape or serious illness, challenge people's beliefs in the benevolence of the world,

their perceptions of the world as meaningful and comprehensible, and their views of themselves as positive and worthy. These three postulates form the basis of what she terms "world assumptions". As in Epstein's theory, experience confirms these high-order postulates, often through self-fulfilling prophecies, thus making them highly resistant to change. Information that is slightly discrepant with these postulates may be re-interpreted in order to assimilate it into the individual's cognitive belief system. Highly discrepant information, however, can challenge these postulates, forcing the individual to construct new theories that can encompass this information.

In facing aversive events such as victimization, the unassimilated information forces the individual to question the validity of the previously held assumptions. In general, people believe they are relatively invulnerable; bad things happen to other people, but not to them. They overestimate the probability of experiencing positive events, while underestimating the probability of experiencing negative events (Perloff, 1983; Weinstein, 1980). Although unrealistic, this "assumption of invulnerability" protects one from anxiously mulling over possible misfortunes.

Victimization, however, shatters this illusion. The victim is suddenly one of the percentage of other people to whom bad things occur. The victim feels vulnerable either

because he or she now believes that there is bad in the world, or that bad events happen randomly, or that he or she is somehow a bad person. A victim experiences firsthand that bad things do happen. How then can one still assume that the world or people are good when challenged with evidence that they are not?

The perception that events in the world are understandable and orderly, and thus predictable, forms the basis of the assumption that the world is meaningful. Lerner's "just world theory" addresses this notion. If the world is just, people get what they deserve. If one is good, good things will befall him/her. More important is the exaggerated belief that people have control over aversive events. Thus, victimization challenges the victim's perception of the world as either meaningful or predictable.

The notion that bad things happen only to bad people relates to questions of self-worth after the occurrence of a victimization. The assumption of self-esteem both relates intimately to and influences the other perceptions of the world. The resistance of self-esteem to daily changes is often shattered by victimization, leading to global effects on the rest of the self-system. Victims feel less worthy. Because of the aversive event, the victim may now view him or herself as weak, thus he or she feels more vulnerable to life's events, which in turn lowers self-esteem. Rather

than bad events occurring to others, it has happened to them. Victims, therefore, view themselves as powerless, weak, needy, frightened, lacking autonomy and deviant (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983).

#### Divorce as an Aversive Event

Children of divorce also face an aversive event that may seriously challenge their previously held assumptions about the world. Although the way this group reacts to the aversive event may differ from the reaction of other victimized groups, children of divorce must similarly reconcile their new "information" with their prior belief system. As suggested by the previously reviewed clinical research, divorce for some children can lead to the child's questioning notions of social reality, particularly the permanence of relationships (Hess & Camera, 1979). To the child the world is less predictable and less reliable, thus heightening the child's sense of his or her own vulnerability (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975).

World assumptions affect how the individual interprets the environment. Challenges to the broad assumptions concerning the belief in the benevolence of the world and the benevolence of people may influence specific beliefs about interpersonal relationships. When discussing the future, children of divorce, now between the ages of 16 and 18, were found to repeatedly mention a sense of vulnerability and the fear of being hurt by romantic



relationships. This was particularly true for young women (Wallerstein, 1987). Despite the intention to marry and the belief in romantic love, two-thirds of these subjects were apprehensive about the possible breakup of their own future marriages. One-half of both the young men and young women feared being betrayed, not only in future relationships, but in their present relationships as well.

In a study conducted with University of Massachusetts-Amherst undergraduates, subjects from divorced families' perceptions of the benevolence of others proved the best predictor of their anticipated success in a future marriage (Roberts, 1986). Self-esteem, on the other hand, proved the best predictor for subjects from non-divorced families.

This finding does not necessarily indicate that children from divorced families are less trusting of other people, but rather that they are more aware of the impact of others on interpersonal outcomes. Trust may be a more salient issue for them than it is for those whose parents are not divorced (Roberts, 1986).

Is trust really a more salient issue? What is it about the experience of parental divorce that would affect trust? As previously mentioned, children of divorce question the reliability of the world around them and the dependability of others to meet their needs. The stability of their interpersonal environment has been broken and the continuity of fundamental relationships has been disrupted.

Of particular interest is the evidence that these effects may linger into adolescence. When discussing intimate relationships, children of divorce speak of fear of betrayal and vulnerability.

The research on trust addresses these themes. Trust can be thought of in terms of general trust or interpersonal trust between individuals. Generalized trust is the abstract view that the world and people, in general, are benevolent, whereas interpersonal trust relates to trust in a particular person. Interpersonal trust encompasses the belief in the integrity of another individual (faith), the belief that a partner is truly interested in the other's welfare, honesty, dependability (fulfillment of promises), and predictability (Lazeriere & Huston, 1980; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). \*To a child who witnessed the dissolution of a marriage, and lost a parent as a result, the ability to depend on other people in intimate relationships may be a crucial issue, particularly in the early dating years.

In this study we hoped to investigate the effect of divorce on trust at three levels from the very broad end of the generality gradient to the very specific: generalized trust, interpersonal trust, and interpersonal trust in the context of marriage. Although interpersonal trust incorporates both intimate and non-intimate relationships, within the context of marriage trust specifically refers to

an intimate as a potential spouse. Because previous research has shown that the belief in the benevolence of the world falls to differentiate between subjects from different family structures (Roberts, 1986), one could argue that parental divorce only influences the child's trust at the more specific level of interpersonal relationships. Daily experience with other people may eventually restore the child's faith in the benevolence of the world and people in general, but the dissolution of the parents' marriage, resulting in the loss of a parent, may caution the child against intimacy. The potential estrangement from either parent, but more often the non-custodial parent, thus could affect the child's trust in any close relationship. At the most basic level, however, a divorce exemplifies a failed marriage; the effects of the divorce on the child therefore may not generalize beyond decreased trust in this context. The child may be able to accept intimacy in dating relationships, but be increasingly cautious with regard to marriage. The child may perceive the partner as sufficiently trustworthy in a dating situation, but may have reservations when considering him or her as a potential spouse.

We did not expect differences between subjects from divorced families versus non-divorced on indices of generalized trust (i.e. measures of human benevolence), but rather anticipated differences on measures of interpersonal

trust, with interpersonal trust as expressed in the context of marriage displaying the greatest differences. In conjunction with our investigation of the effect of divorce on different levels of trust, we included as a secondary analysis measures of optimism about intimate relationships and marriage. Decreased levels of trust at the interpersonal level should correspond with a decrease in optimism regarding the success of these relationships.

\* Children of divorce, as other people, express a desire to marry, but unlike others may doubt the permanence of these relationships. Further, to test that trust is a more salient issue, we measured subjects' chronically accessible constructs. We expected that for children of divorce trust is a more salient issue, and thus would be expressed by presence of trust or trust-related terms when measuring the accessible constructs.

In conjunction with the more recent findings in this field, we also analyzed our subjects by the perceived level of conflict between the parents, ignoring parents' marital status. It is unclear whether it is the dissolution of the parents' marriage or the conflict between the parents that proves detrimental to the child. If parental divorce resulted in greater harmony in the family, would not this child suffer less psychologically than a child whose parents were married, but fight continually? We hypothesized that subjects from high conflict families

(both parents married and parents divorced) would be less trusting in general than subjects from low conflict families. Subjects whose parents divorced and who indicated high conflict should be least trusting.



## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Subjects

Subjects were 57 college-aged students whose parents were divorced and 57 matched students whose parents were not divorced, recruited from introductory psychology classes. Thirty-one of these pairs were male and twenty-six were female. Although many previous studies on children of divorce included children who lost a parent through death as a second comparison group, this study focused on how divorce as a particular psycho-social event affects the child in the family. Thus, any subject who indicated the death of one or both parents was not included. Subjects who were themselves either married, separated, or divorced were also excluded.

#### Procedure

At the beginning of the semester, the experimenter recruited subjects from several introductory psychology classes. With the instructor's permission, the experimenter distributed a one-page demographic survey to all students volunteering to participate. Students were informed that responding to these questions could facilitate their participation in psychological experiments for which they would receive experimental credit.

Two weeks later, subjects were contacted by phone and invited to participate in a study on people's beliefs. The

selected sample were those students who indicated that their parents were divorced. These subjects were most actively recruited. For every one of these subjects who agreed to participate, another from the sample of students whose parents were married was chosen. More than one student who matched the subject from the divorced family on the demographic variables was chosen to improve the chances of participation.

Subjects from the non-parental divorce sample were matched to the students from divorced families on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, the strength of their religious faith, and year in school. Additionally, to whatever extent possible, to control for the influence of the type of family environment in which the subject was raised, subjects were also matched by parental education and income, the number of siblings, and size of town/city where raised.

Subjects completed the survey in groups of five to ten. The survey was distributed in five separate parts to minimize the perceived length of the survey, and also to insure that the term divorce was not seen or noticed by subjects while filling out the questionnaire; all items related to divorce were saved until the very last section.

This procedure also discouraged the subjects from skipping sections of the survey, as sometimes occurs in lengthy questionnaires. Separate sections also enabled the

experimenter to monitor the subjects' progress. The importance of reading each statement carefully was emphasized in an attempt to dissuade subjects from simply repeating their responses.

The survey was divided in the following manner: Section 1 determined the subjects' accessible constructs (to be described in the Materials section); Section 2 included the World Assumptions scale and the Belief In Human Benevolence scale; Section 3 included the two Interpersonal trust scales and the optimism about future relationships questions; Section 4 contained all those items pertinent to both the subject's relationship with his or her biological parents while growing up and the measures of trust between the biological parents; and Section 5 contained the demographic and divorce questions.

After the subjects completed the survey, they were thoroughly debriefed as to the true intent of the study and the experimenter's hypotheses. Subjects were requested not to discuss the experiment with other students until the end of the semester, as this was an ongoing study.

### Materials

The questionnaire consisted of seven scales or sections. The order of the presented targets in the section measuring construct accessibility was randomized, but all subjects received the remaining sections in

Identical order. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

### Construct Accessibility

Following the design described in Higgins, King, & Mavin (1982) to ascertain verbal construct accessibility, subjects were instructed to describe separately two male friends, two female friends, and themselves using no more than ten traits. A construct was determined accessible if it was mentioned in the descriptions of both the self and one friend or three or more friends. The subjects completed this section first to avoid the items in the trust scales influencing the subjects' choice of adjectives. Because Higgins et al. (1982) only measured the accessibility of the construct, order effects was not a relevant issue. In this study, however, we were also interested in examining the difference between the salient traits used to describe opposite sex versus same sex friends and thus randomized the order of presentation to control for any priming effects.

### Generalized Trust

Janoff-Bulman's World Assumptions Scale (In press) was designed to measure subjects' assumptive worlds. This scale is a 32-item instrument with four items measuring belief in each of the subscales: a Benevolent World or the goodness or badness of the world ; Benevolent People or the goodness or badness of human nature; Chance or the random

distribution of events; Control or the controlling of outcomes through actions; Justice or the reception of deserved results; Self-Chance or the extent to which an individual is lucky; Self-Control or the extent to which an individual actually controls outcomes by taking appropriate actions; and Self-Esteem or how highly the individual views him or herself. We were most interested in the two subscales measuring benevolence of the world and benevolence of people as indicators of generalized trust. Subjects were asked to indicate agreement with statements on a 6-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". A neutral response was not possible. Subscales of this scale have been supported by factor analyses and also have had good reliability (alpha .68 to .86, Janoff-Bulman, In press).

Respondents next completed the Belief in Human Benevolence scale (Thornton & Kline, 1982), which taps opinions about people's natural benevolence. Using the same 6-point scale as in the previous measure, subjects again indicated their agreement with such statements as "People are pleased if they see someone happy" and "Given the opportunity, people are dishonest." In designing this questionnaire, Thornton and Kline (1982) reported moderately high reliability measures for their three samples (alpha = .77, .76, and .78). They also reported that the BHB scale correlated substantially with the perception of cooperation

Index ( $r = .50$ ), while correlating negatively with the oral pessimism dimension of Kline's psychoanalytic personality scale (average  $r = -.40$ ) and the psychoticism dimension of Eysenck's personality measure (average  $r = -.33$ ) (Thorton & Kline, 1982). Item content corresponds with the concept of "human benevolence": high scorers believe that people are unselfishly concerned for others' well-being, can be trusted not to exploit others, are likely to reciprocate kindness, etc. Low scorers, on the other hand, assert that people are selfishly concerned only with their own interest, will exploit others if given the chance, and are unlikely to reciprocate kindness.

#### Interpersonal Trust

The eight-item Dyadic Trust scale developed by Lazeriere & Huston (1980) was designed to measure the extent to which one trusts a partner. Examples of these questions include: "I feel that I can trust my partner completely"; "I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration"; and "I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me." More importantly the authors reported that it has high reliability ( $\alpha = .93$ ) and is uncorrelated with social desirability ( $r = .00$ , n.s.). This scale measures a single factor and is moderately correlated ( $r = .45$  to  $.48$ ) with the Rubin Love Scale (1970).

To determine if divorce affects trust in only intimate interpersonal relationships, subjects completed this scale



using first an intimate partner as a reference, then contrasted these answers with responses made on the same scale when employing their best friend as the target. Subjects who were not presently dating were instructed to refer to a fictional partner with whom they are seriously involved. A single item measuring the importance of long-term, intimate relationships and another rating the importance of friendship followed each respective scale.

Two items were also designed to measure more precise beliefs about relationships than indicated in the world assumptions or trust ratings. Specifically, the items measured the subjects' general optimism toward future relationships: how confident they were that they would have successful love relationships in the future and how optimistic they were that these relationships would be successful. Responses were summed to indicate optimism about future relationships.

The Dyadic Trust scale was also repeated for the subject's perceptions of his or her relationship with both biological mother and father while growing up. Utilizing the Dyadic Trust scale in this way we hoped to obtain some indication of whether parental divorce affected a child's ability to trust his or her parents. Subjects then indicated how their biological mother viewed their biological father in terms of trustworthiness and vice versa. Measures of trust between biological parents may

predict the extent to which the child will later be able to trust his or her own intimate partner via modeling.

### Interpersonal Trust In Context of Marriage

Rempel, Holmes & Zanna (1985) designed a 17-item Trust Scale to measure levels of trust within close interpersonal relationships. Items were tailored to represent predictability, dependability, and faith. Predictability measures the consistency of a partner's behavior ("My partner behaves in a very consistent manner"), dependability focuses on dispositional qualities of the partner, "which warrant confidence in the face of risk and potential hurt" ("I can rely on my partner to keep the promises he/she makes to me"), and faith measures one's confidence in the relationship and the responsiveness of the partner when facing an uncertain future ("Though times may change and the future is uncertain; I know my partner will always be ready and willing to offer me strength and support").

The authors reported (1985) that these scales have both very good reliability and validity. The overall Cronbach's alpha is .81, with subscale reliabilities of .80, .72, and .70 for faith, dependability, and predictability respectively. Besides face validity, the subscales discriminate between both one another and general liking for the partner. Love as measured on Rubins's Loving and Liking Scale (1973) is moderately correlated with faith

( $r = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ ), more weakly correlated with dependability ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and very weakly correlated with predictability (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985).

In using this scale in this study, subjects were asked to imagine that they are in the first year of marriage and to as realistically as possible respond to statements about their partner on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 6 "strongly agree". Again, two items were designed to indicate more specific opinions of marriage. Subjects reported on a 5 point scale their beliefs about the likelihood of getting married and of remaining married. Responses were summed to indicate optimism about marriage.

#### Demographics

The final section of the questionnaire contained the same demographic questions asked of the subjects earlier in the semester (age, gender, year in school, race, religion, parents' marital status, etc.) and additional questions regarding the happiness of the parents' marriage. The subject of divorce was not introduced until this point to avoid influencing the subjects' responses on the previous scales. The last page of the demographic section was filled out by only those subjects from divorced families and included questions related to the divorce and the post-divorce family.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

Before analyzing our results, we checked the reliability of each of the scales employed in this survey. Although most of these scales have been previously utilized in the literature, it was important to check the reliabilities for this sample. The reliabilities for the eight subscales of the World Assumptions Scale were: Benevolent World (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.81$ ), Benevolent People (.80), Chance (.62), Control (.68), Justice (.62), Self-Chance (.86), Self-Control (.76), and Self-Esteem (.79). The Belief in Human Benevolence Scale had a stronger reliability ( $\alpha=.87$ ) for this population than previously reported. The three subscales of the Trust Scale had good to very good reliability. Dependability, although lower than previously reported by Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna, was good ( $\alpha=.69$ ). Faith was approximately the same (.81) and Predictability was much lower (.55). The Dyadic Trust Scales showed very good reliability; partner trust  $\alpha$  equaled .90, for the scale designed to measure trust in one's mother the  $\alpha$  equaled .93, father trust was .95, and friend trust .88.

The two items that measured general optimism toward relationships were correlated and had an  $\alpha$  of .83, and the two items measuring optimism about marriage specifically were correlated and had an  $\alpha$  of .67.

Table 1 presents the inter-item correlations for all of the trust scales.

Although this study was designed to compare subjects pair-wise, t-tests on the demographic variables indicated no significant differences between the matched subjects. Thus, all of the subsequent analyses compared differences between groups rather than individuals.

#### Parents' Marital Status

We hypothesized that parental divorce would affect a child's trust in intimate others, but not the world in general. Regarding the generalized measures of trust, there was no significant difference between parental divorced and parental married subjects on the measures of human benevolence (Belief in Human Benevolence scale; Thorton & Kline, 1982) and the benevolence of the world or people (as measured by two subscales of the World Assumptions scale, Janoff-Bulman, in press) as measured by a 2x2 (gender by parents' marital status) MANOVA. No differences were found on any of the world assumptions, all of which gauged beliefs about the world and self. However, a 2x2 (gender by parents' marital status) multivariate analysis of variance did reveal a significant difference between parental-divorced subjects and parental-married subjects on measures of interpersonal trust. As shown in Table 2, subjects' mean scores differed on the extent to which they trusted their parents (mother 36.14 vs. 41.37,

Table 1. Inter-Trust Scale Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<u>Generalized Trust:</u>														
1. Belief in Human Benevolence	--													
2. Benevolence of the world	.58**													
3. Benevolence of People	.73**	.74**												
<u>Interpersonal Trust:</u>														
4. Trust in Mother	.22**	.23**	.16*											
5. Trust in Father	.33**	.37**	.32**	.41**										
6. Mother's Trust in Father	.23**	.26**	.27**	.31**	.67**									
7. Father's Trust in Mother	.10	.11	.03	.55**	.43**	.65**								
8. Trust in a Friend	.25**	.16*	.26**	.05	.21*	.25**	-.03							
9. Trust in a Partner	.28**	.22**	.16*	.27**	.20*	.24**	.25**	.24**						
10. Optimism toward Relationships	.18*	.27**	.13	.18*	.24**	.25**	.26**	.06	.41**					
<u>Interpersonal Trust in Marriage:</u>														
11. Dependability of Spouse	.36**	.35**	.33**	.22**	.25**	.34**	.16*	.36**	.62**	.43**				
12. Faith in Spouse	.35**	.27**	.19*	.14	.30**	.34**	.16*	.32**	.59**	.49**	.66**			
13. Predictability of Spouse	.03	.02	.07	-.04	.03	.03	-.09	.25**	.31**	.27**	.54**	.50**		
14. Optimism toward Marriage	.35**	.33**	.31**	.28**	.23**	.30**	.30**	.17*	.47**	.46**	.42**	.17*	.54**	--

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$



Table 2. Comparison of Mean Values for Trust and Optimism Scales by Parents' Marital Status (n=110)

	Parents Divorced	Parents Married
<u>Generalized Trust:</u>		
Belief in Human Benevolence	82.03	83.43
Benevolence of World	16.22	16.86
Benevolence of People	17.23	18.02
<u>Interpersonal Trust:</u>		
Trust in Mother	36.14	41.37**
Trust in Father	30.48	39.37****
Mother's Trust in Father	22.62	35.06****
Father's Trust in Mother	26.58	39.32****
Trust in a Friend	39.42	39.16
Trust in a Partner	36.58	38.54
Optimism toward Relationships	5.53	5.90
<u>Interpersonal Trust in Marriage:</u>		
Dependability of Spouse	23.04	24.62*
Faith in Spouse	36.16	35.76
Predictability of Spouse	17.65	16.95
Optimism toward Marriage	5.65	6.23*

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* significant at  $p < .005$

\*\*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$

$F(1,106)=8.60$ ,  $p<.005$ ; father 30.48 vs. 39.37,  $F(1,106)=18.39$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but not their best friend or their boyfriend/girlfriend. Subjects from divorced families indicated less trust in their parents while growing up than did subjects from intact homes. Not surprisingly, subjects whose parents were divorced also indicated less trust between their parents; divorced mothers showed less trust in their ex-spouses (22.62 vs. 35.06,  $F(1,105)=75.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and the fathers reciprocated these feelings (26.58 vs. 39.32,  $F(1,105)=54.86$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Because in divorce custody is most often awarded to the mother, we anticipated a decreased level in trust of the father, but were surprised by the corresponding decrease in trust of the mother. In this study, the majority of the subjects (77.2%) reported that their mother retained sole custody. Therefore to ascertain if the diminishing trust in mother was unduely influenced by those few individuals whose mothers did not retain custody (including those cases where custody was shared), we then analyzed the results without these individuals. A 2x2 (gender by parents' marital status) ANOVA on those subjects who lived with their mothers (both married and divorced) while growing up showed that all the previously significant variables remained significant, including decreased trust in mother. In addition, analyses yielded a two-way interaction between gender and parents' marital status on father trust ( $F=4.07$ ,

$p < .05$ ), which indicated that females from divorced families expressed the lowest trust in their fathers.

Despite differences in trust of parents, the  $2 \times 2$  (gender by parents' marital status) MANOVA found no differences between the parental divorced and the parental married subjects in trust of partner or optimism toward future relationships (see Table 2). Because not all subjects were presently dating someone, those who were not dating were required on the Dyadic Trust scale to imagine themselves in a serious dating relationship. T-tests indicated similar numbers of students dating in each group ( $n=33$ , parents married;  $n=27$ , parents divorced) and no significant differences emerged on demographic variables between those dating and those not. A  $2 \times 2$  (gender by parents' marital status) ANOVA focusing on only dating subjects continued to find no differences with respect to trust in a dating relationship ( $38.26$  vs.  $39.15$ ,  $F(1,56) = .10$  n.s.) or optimism towards future relationships ( $6.00$  vs.  $6.42$ ,  $F(1,56) = .82$ , n.s.). The initial  $2 \times 2$  MANOVA also indicated a gender by parents' marital status interaction on optimism toward future relationships ( $F=4.81$ ,  $p < .05$ ); females whose parents were married scored highest on this scale, whereas females whose parents divorced appeared to be the least optimistic about their future relationships.<sup>1</sup>

When viewing relationships in the context of marriage, subjects differed as to how they viewed their future marriage partner in terms of dependability (23.04 vs. 24.62,  $F(1,106)=4.02$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and how optimistically they viewed their own marriage in the future (5.65 vs. 6.23,  $F(df)=5.14$ ,  $p<.05$ ). As predicted (and shown in Table 2), subjects from divorced families viewed their future spouse as less dependable and regarded the success of their future marriage more pessimistically. Although all subjects were asked to imagine themselves married, as on the Dyadic Trust scale, using imagined partners can present problems in interpretation. Again, a 2x2 (gender by parents' marital status) ANOVA was performed on only those subjects presently dating. The results revealed that the main effect of parents' marital status on how optimistically subjects viewed their own future marriage remained significant (5.67 vs. 6.48,  $F(1,56)=5.06$ ,  $p<.05$ ), while the dependability of the future spouse was marginally significant (22.70 vs. 24.94,  $F(1,56)=3.62$ ,  $p=.062$ ).

An examination of the overall correlations of dependability of future spouse and the optimism toward marriage with the subjects' relationship with the parents some revealed interesting results (see Table 3). Although the perceived dependability was correlated with the extent to which the subject trusts his or her parents, it was more strongly correlated with the mother's trust in the father

Table 3. Correlation of Relationship with Parents with Dependability of Spouse and Optimism toward Marriage

	Dependability of Spouse	Optimism toward Marriage
Trust in Mother	.22***	.28***
Trust in Father	.28***	.23**
Mother's Trust in Father	.32****	.30***
Father's Trust in Mother	.16*	.21***
Relationship with Non-Custodial Parent	.35***	.23*
Relationship with Stepparent	.23	.24*
View of Mother:		
before Divorce	.01	-.02
after Divorce	-.08	-.13
Now	.12	-.22**
View of Father:		
before Divorce	.02	-.01
after Divorce	-.16	-.06
Now	-.28*	-.23*

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* significant at  $p < .005$

\*\*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$

( $r=.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and for parental divorced subjects, with their relationship with the non-custodial parent ( $r=.35$ ,  $p<.005$ ). Optimism toward marriage was most strongly correlated for all subjects with both the mother's trust in the father ( $r=.30$ ,  $p<.005$ ) and father's trust in the mother ( $r=.30$ ,  $p<.005$ ), while it was the relationship with the stepparent, not the non-custodial parent, that proved most strongly associated with this variable ( $r=.34$ ,  $p<.05$ ) for the children of divorce. Optimism toward marriage was also correlated with the parental divorced subject's present feelings towards mother ( $r=-.32$ ,  $p<.005$ ) and towards father ( $r=-.23$ ,  $p<.05$ ), but not with their feelings before or after the divorce. In both cases, the more positively the subject feels towards his or her mother or father, the more optimistic he or she feels in regards to marriage. How dependably these subjects viewed their future spouse, however, was only related to their present feelings toward their father ( $r=-.28$ ,  $p<.02$ ).

Differences between particular correlations by group were calculated using a Fisher  $r$ - $Z$  transformation. Subjects from married families revealed a stronger relationship between their self-worth and their optimism about future relationships than those from divorced families ( $r=.51$  vs.  $r=.15$ ,  $t(108)=2.14$ ,  $p<.05$ ), their trust in their dating partner is more related to their faith in their hypothetical spouse ( $r=.74$  vs.  $r=.49$ ,  $t(108)=2.14$ ,



$p < .05$ ), which in turn is also related to their optimism about marriage ( $r = .59$  vs.  $r = .29$ ,  $t(107) = 2.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ). With regard to trust in parents, subjects whose parents were married were more likely to associate their faith in their future spouse with trust in their mother ( $r = .38$  vs.  $r = .01$ ,  $t(108) = 2.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

As noted earlier, there were no indications that children from divorced families held different general beliefs about the world around them or the people in it. Analyses of trust as a chronically accessible construct also failed to reveal any significant differences. The number of chronically accessible constructs, as defined by Higgins, King, and Mavin (1982) was nearly identical for both groups (divorced 16, married 17). To determine accessibility a subject must employ the construct of interest while either describing both him or herself and two friends, or three or more friends. In this study, trust was divided into five separate components: honesty, dependability, faith, predictability (as indicated in the literature), and trusting (as indicated by subject response). Trusting was included because although the adjective does not describe the extent to which the subject him or herself may trust, it does indicate the extent to which he or she perceives that others do. Analyses of the frequency or category of this response also failed to yield any significant differences.

### Differences within Divorced Subjects

We now turn our attention to several issues prevalent in the divorce literature; gender as a determining factor in coping, the effect of the child's age at the time of the divorce, the perceived impact both at the time of the divorce and presently, and finally, we address the issue of perceived conflict in the family as an alternative way of interpreting the effects of divorce.

#### Gender and Divorce Age

Three-way (gender by parents' marital status by age) multivariate analyses of variance on the trust scales found no significant differences due to gender or child's age at the time of divorce on any of the measures of trust, both general and interpersonal. In contrast to Wallerstein and Kelly's study (1980), divorce age was also unrelated to subjects' optimism about marriage.

Age at the time of divorce appeared to have some effect on how the child viewed the parent before the divorce. Those whose parents were divorced when they were teenagers (11-19 years when parents divorced) reported a more negative view of their father before the divorce than those whose parents were divorced when they were younger (4.17,  $F(2,46)=8.93$ ,  $p<.001$ ). These same subjects also reported viewing their mother more negatively prior to the divorce (3.00,  $F(2,46)=3.36$ ,  $p<.05$ ). These effects, however, disappear shortly after the divorce, for no

differences were found on views of the parents following the divorce or presently.

Divorce age produced a two-way gender by age interaction on perceived impact at the time of the divorce. Females who were between the ages of 0 and 5 at the time of divorce indicated the least impact, while males at this same age claimed the greatest impact (.67 vs. 2.20,  $F(2,49)=3.65$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The reports of the children of this age group should be interpreted with caution, however, due to the very small sample size (females,  $n=10$ ; males,  $n=6$ ). An assessment of present impact failed to differentiate between these groups.

#### Impact

The greater the subjects' perception of the divorce impact at the time it occurred, the more negatively they viewed their mother presently ( $r=.33$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and the less they trusted her ( $r=-.37$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Perceptions of present impact, however, were more closely related to the child's relationship with the father and the stepparent. The greater the indication of present impact, the more negatively the subject viewed the father in the present ( $r=.39$ ,  $p<.01$ ), the poorer the relationship the child reported with both the non-custodial parent, usually the father, ( $r=-.37$ ,  $p<.005$ ) and the stepparent ( $r=-.30$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and the less trust the child had in the father ( $r=-.49$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Mother's trust in the father ( $r=-.40$ ,  $p<.005$ )

also correlated with present impact; the less trust the mother had in the father, the greater the impact reported by subjects.

The present impact of the divorce was also associated with how the subject views him or herself. High impact correlated with a more negative view of the self as measured by present ratings of the self on a seven point scale ( $r=.33$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and also of other people in general, also determined by ratings on the same scale ( $r=.48$ ,  $p<.01$ ). A more negative view of the self was highly correlated with lower self-esteem as measured by Janoff-Bulman's Self-worth subscale ( $r=-.73$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and the perception that the individual has less control over outcomes ( $r=-.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Relations with father, the non-custodial parent (in most cases, the father), and the stepparent were also associated with the subject's present view of the self. A more negative view of the self was associated with a more negative view of the father ( $r=.43$ ,  $p<.01$ ), of the non-custodial parent ( $r=-.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and with poorer relations with the stepparent ( $r=-.30$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

### Conflict

A recent study by Enos and Handal (1986) indicated that a child's psychological adjustment and satisfaction were better explained by the effects of perceived conflict within the family than the more objective parents' marital

status. In the last section of the survey subjects were asked to indicate the level of conflict between their parents.

#### Conflict in Divorce vs. Married Parents

Subjects who indicated either very or extreme levels of conflict (3 or 4 on a 5-point scale with an endpoint of 4) between their biological parents were denoted "high" conflict, while responses of "not at all" or "somewhat" (0 or 1) determined placement in the "low" conflict group. Those whose response indicated moderate conflict were not included in either group.

Subjects in the parental divorce group were asked to indicate the degree of conflict between their parents before the divorce, in the few years following the divorce, and also presently. Subjects whose parents were married reported on a single item how much conflict existed generally.

Nearly all of the subjects (n=44) from the divorced group reported a high level of conflict before the divorce, and all but two of the subjects who reported conflict after the divorce also indicated conflict prior to the divorce. Analyses that focused solely on either conflict before the divorce or after the divorce between high and low conflict subjects failed to find significant results on any of the trust variables. Although, analyses on present conflict alone produced significant results, crosstabulations of

parental conflict at all three periods of time indicate that every subject who indicated present conflict between parents also indicated conflict both before and after the divorce. Using only those individuals who indicated conflict both before, after, and presently between their parents ( $n=13$ ), in a  $2 \times 2$  (gender by conflict) MANOVA on the trust scales revealed that analogous to the findings by parents' marital status, subjects who perceived constant conflict between their parents trusted both their mother (30.13 vs. 38.80,  $F(1,43)=6.58$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and their father (19.82 vs. 33.91,  $F(1,43)=13.44$ ,  $p<.001$ ) less than those who reported conflict at one or more times, but not continually.<sup>2</sup> Indications of mother's trust in father (17.51 vs. 24.71,  $F(1,43)=8.64$ ,  $p<.005$ ), but not father's trust in the mother, was also less in the high conflict group. Interestingly, continual conflict affected generalized trust and not interpersonal trust. Significant differences on the perceived benevolence of the world and of people (as measured by World Assumptions Scale, Janoff-Bulman, in press; Belief in Human Benevolence Scale, Thorton & Kline, 1982) were revealed between high and low conflict subjects. Having experienced high levels of unrelenting conflict lessened one's view of the world as benevolent (12.14 vs. 17.57,  $F(1,43)=14.27$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and the belief that people are benevolent (Benevolence of People, 14.56 vs. 18.59,  $F(1,43)=10.08$ ,  $p<.005$ ; Belief in



Human Benevolence, 76.08 vs. 85.08,  $F(1,43)=5.66$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Interpersonally, high levels of conflict also affected the subject's preception of the dependability of the spouse.

Analyses found no differences between the high and low level conflict subjects on the demographic variables. These 13 subjects did, however, express a more negative feeling presently toward their father than the other subjects (4.15 vs. 2.84,  $t(55)=-2.09$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Comparing high and low levels of conflict between parents who have remained married yielded only a few significant results; high conflict subjects trusted their father less than the low conflict subjects (34.88 vs. 41.91,  $F(1,39)=4.32$ ,  $p<.05$ ), while parents from high conflict families were perceived as trusting each other less (mother's trust in father, 27.88 vs. 37.22,  $F(1,39)=12.40$ ,  $p<.001$  ; father's trust in mother, 33.25 vs. 42.63,  $F(1,39)=11.29$ ,  $p<.005$ ). The differences on the remaining variables were in the same direction as those of the divorced group, but non-significant. The non-significance of the results may be due to the sample size ( $n=6$ ) rather than any inherent difference resulting from parents' marital status; thus we combined the two groups (divorced and non-divorced).

Again, as was found in examing the divorce group by level of conflict, subjects who reported high conflict between parents were less trusting of the parents

themselves (mother 34.67 vs. 40.84,  $F(1,83)=6.51$ ,  $p<.05$ ; father 24.79 vs. 38.61,  $F(1,83)=23.83$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and believed that the world and people were less benevolent (Belief In Human Benevolence, 77.92 vs. 84.92,  $F(1,83)=6.42$ ,  $p<.05$ ; World Assumptions: world, 13.43 vs. 17.48,  $F(1,83)=14.64$ ,  $p<.001$ ; people, 15.14 vs. 18.36,  $F(1,83)=10.64$ ,  $p<.005$ ). Interpersonally, high levels of conflict also affected the subject's preception of the dependability of the spouse. Those subjects from families with high levels of conflict considered the future spouse to be less dependable than those subjects from low conflict families (22.38 vs. 24.45,  $F(1,83)=3.99$ ,  $p<.05$ ). As would be expected, these subjects perceived both their parents as having less trust in each other than parents from low conflict families (mother's trust in father, 20.76 vs. 31.94,  $F(1,83)=25.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ; father's trust in mother, 26.73 vs. 36.37,  $F(1,83)=12.82$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Table 4 summarizes these results. Statistical tests demonstrated no differences between high and low conflict subjects across parents' marital status on any of the demographic variables. A superficial examination was made of subjects' accessibility of the trust construct; as before no differences were found for high vs. low conflict.

Further analyses were performed to determine the joint effects of parental divorce and conflict. In Table 5, we see that by adding parents' marital status as a factor, the

Table 4. Comparison of Mean Values for Trust and Optimism Scales by High and Low Conflict (n=87)

	High Conflict	Low Conflict
<u>Generalized Trust:</u>		
Belief in Human Benevolence	77.92	84.92*
Benevolence of World	13.43	17.48****
Benevolence of People	15.14	18.36***
<u>Interpersonal Trust:</u>		
Trust in Mother	34.67	40.84*
Trust in Father	24.79	38.61****
Mother's Trust in Father	20.76	31.94****
Father's Trust in Mother	26.73	36.37****
Trust in a Friend	40.87	39.55
Trust in a Partner	37.88	38.39
Optimism toward Relationships	5.39	5.89
<u>Interpersonal Trust in Marriage:</u>		
Dependability of Spouse	22.38	24.45*
Faith in Spouse	35.17	36.84
Predictability of Spouse	18.14	17.38
Optimism toward Marriage	5.78	6.03

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\*\* significant at  $p < .005$

\*\*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$

Table 5. Comparison of Mean Values for Trust and Optimism Scales for High Conflict Parents Divorced and Low Conflict Parents Married (n=50)

	High Conflict Parents Divorced	Low Conflict Parents Married
<u>Generalized Trust:</u>		
Belief in Human Benevolence	76.08	84.21*
Benevolence of World	12.14	17.25****
Benevolence of People	14.56	18.24***
<u>Interpersonal Trust:</u>		
Trust in Mother	30.13	42.88****
Trust in Father	19.82	41.91****
Mother's Trust in Father	17.51	37.22****
Father's Trust in Mother	23.42	42.63****
Trust in a Friend	39.73	39.10
Trust in a Partner	36.92	39.31
Optimism toward Relationships	5.05	6.01*
<u>Interpersonal Trust in Marriage:</u>		
Dependability of Spouse	21.64	25.02*
Faith in Spouse	35.19	36.51
Predictability of Spouse	19.39	17.65
Optimism toward Marriage	5.39	6.27*

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\*\* significant at  $p < .005$

\*\*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$

2x2 (gender by conflict) MANOVA produced significant results in regards to both the optimism towards dating relationships and marriage, in addition to the decreased generalized trust and interpersonal trust indicative of high conflict subjects. Subjects whose parents divorced and who indicated continual conflict between their parents indicated being less optimistic about the success of their love relationships (5.05 vs. 6.01,  $F(1,46)=3.93$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and less optimistic about the success of their future marriages (5.39 vs. 6.27,  $F(1,46)=6.36$ ,  $p<.05$ ) than subjects whose parents were married and who were perceived to have little conflict between them.

Although one might attribute the differences between subjects to the good reliability of a scale, reliable scales such as Faith in future Spouse ( $\alpha=.81$ ), Trust in Friend ( $\alpha=.88$ ) and Trust in a Partner ( $\alpha=.90$ ) failed to produce any significant results, whereas the Dependability of Spouse ( $\alpha=.69$ ) and Optimism toward Marriage ( $\alpha=.67$ ) did. The generalized trust scales, all of which had an alpha of .80 or higher, failed to differentiate between subjects when focusing on parents' marital status, but produced highly significant differences when examining high vs. low parental conflict subjects. Thus, the inconsistency of good reliable scales to produce significant results indicates the inability to attribute these findings merely to the affects of reliability.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

Our main hope in conducting this study was to clear up any confusion in the current literature on children of divorce by concentrating on not only how subjects' responded to survey, but also on the psychological beliefs that produced these responses. It is not enough to simply consider <sup>parent</sup>parental divorce affected how successful the child feels his or her own relationships will be, we must also examine specifically how these attitudes were affected via issues of trust. Previous research has recognized that parental divorce involves an adjustment for the child to a new family structure and, sometimes, even a new environment. Our concern, however, was not on the way in which the child adapts at the time of the divorce, but rather on the permanent effects these adjustments may have on the child. In particular, we were interested in the influence this disruption in the family structure has on the child's ability to trust, both in general and in specific relationships. We hypothesized that trust would be most greatly affected at the level of interpersonal relationships, in particular with reference to marriage. As predicted, we found no significant differences on general measures of trust in the world or people between those subjects whose parents were divorced versus those whose parents were married. Although clinical interviews



with young children shortly after the divorce indicated that some of these children viewed the world as less reliable and predictable, and less likely to provide for their needs (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975), the results from our survey suggest that either not all children are affected by their parents' divorce in this manner or that daily experience eventually restores the child's faith in the world and people in general. Discrepancies in the employment of different procedures may also account for this finding. Trust in both parents, however, remains guarded. Children who endured a parental divorce presently indicated less trust in both their mother and their father than those subjects whose parents remained married. Thus, after the shock of the divorce, the child may be able to regain generalized trust, but it appears that he or she is unable to completely trust the two people responsible.

Failure to find significant differences on the measure of trust in a best friend, however, implies that children of divorce do not differ in their ability to trust in close relationships. Interestingly, despite previous research reporting that children of divorce fear being hurt in a romantic relationship (Wallerstein, 1987), subjects also did not differ on their ability to trust in an intimate relationship. Subjects from divorced families indicated equivalent levels of trust in a boyfriend/girlfriend as the other subjects, even in the most serious of relationships.

Consistent with Wallerstein's findings, however, were the indications that females from divorced families in particular fear betrayal, as noted by their pessimistic view toward the future success of their dating relationships. Thus, despite the fact that these women expressed the same degree of trust in their present partner as the other subjects, they remained significantly less optimistic about the success of their relationships.

When the subject of marriage was introduced, however, clear differences affecting both the males and females emerged. Although the now college-aged children from divorced families may have trusted their boyfriends or girlfriends to the same extent as other young adults, when asked to imagine themselves married, they indicated feeling less able to depend on their hypothetical spouse than others, and more unsure of the success of their marriage. Thus, parental divorce does not appear to impair the child's general ability to trust another intimately, only the ability to trust within the context of marriage. The child does not question the benevolence of people in general, or even of a romantic partner in particular, but rather doubts the dependability of a spouse and the longevity of marriage. Parental divorce then has the very specific effect of altering how the child perceives his or her own marriage.

As argued in the literature on victimization, although the existence of an aversive event like divorce is acknowledged, most believe that it is something that happens to other people. For the child of divorce, however, it has happened to his or her own family. Parental divorce, thus, forces the child to somehow assimilate this experience and construct new theories about the world that encompass this information (Epstein, 1980). By narrowly generalizing this experience to only affect trust in the context of marriage, and not in the world in general or people in particular, the child has found the optimal way of coping with this experience. The resulting decreased optimism in the success of marriages or of the dependability of the spouse, as expressed by these subjects, may not be an indication of cynicism but rather a more realistic assessment of the dynamics of relationships.

Thus, over time, parental divorce, without continued conflict between parents, simply exemplifies the fact that some marriages do not last. As a result, the child of divorce's ability to trust only differs from his or her peers in the one realm where their experiences differ: marriage.

Those children, however, who observe continual conflict between parents, regardless of marital status, suffer more serious consequences. Not only are their views of marriage altered, but also their views of the world in

general. Unlike the other children of divorce, these subjects' assimilated their experiences with their parents at several levels of trust, both generally and interpersonally. A divorce that eventually eases the friction between parents only negatively influences the child's perceptions of marriage because over time all other aspects of the child's life stabilizes, thus his or her assumptions about the benevolence of the world and people are restored. Repeated exposure to a parental relationship that is strained is more of a process, the child must continually incorporate this information. High conflict for children of divorce was not conflict before or after the divorce or presently, but descriptions of persistent conflict throughout the child's life. Thus, it is this conflict, not the divorce, that alters the child's assumptions about the world. A divorce that eventually reduces the tension between parents is incorporated into the child's world view as an example of a failed marriage. A parental relationship that never resolves the conflicts represents a more disturbing view of the world. Children in these situations generalize the negative they see in their parents' relationship to their beliefs in human benevolence. These now teenaged subjects trusted their peers, but expressed less trust in people or the world in general, reported decreased optimism about their success in any intimate relationship, both dating and marital, and

Indicated less trust in a hypothetical spouse. Thus, it appears that the parental relationship as a role model for the child affects the perceptions of both marriage and the status of the world at large.

Consequently, research that is interested in examining how the parental relationship affects the child, should not focus on the legal status of the relationship, but rather on the quality. Our results indicated a correspondence between the child's perceptions of the parents' relationship, regardless of marital status, and his or her perceptions of marriage. Overall correlations indicated a relationship between how dependably the subjects viewed their hypothetical spouse and the extent to which they trusted each parent; however, it was the mother's perceived trust in the father that was the most strongly associated with perceptions of dependability of future spouse. How optimistically subjects regarded their own marriage was related to both the mother's trust in the father and the father's trust in the mother. The more conflict perceived between the parents, the less optimistically the subject viewed his or her own success in marriage, and the less favorably he or she regarded the future spouse.

The specifics of the parental divorce also indirectly affected the child's perceptions of marriage. Reports of impact at the time of the divorce versus present indications of impact resulted in different conclusions

about the parents. The greater the impact at the time of the divorce, the more negative the present view of the mother; the greater the impact presently, the more negative the view of the father. A negative view of the father corresponded with lower ratings on the dependability of the future spouse; a negative view of the mother correlates with a more pessimistic view of marriage. Both a negative view of the father and indications that the divorce is presently affecting the subject related to a more negative view of the self. Poor relations with a stepparent was also associated with a more negative view of the self. Good relations with the stepparent, however, correlated with increased optimism about marriage.

Thus, unlike previous studies which emphasized the role of age and gender in the child's adjustment to divorce, our study suggests that the relationship with the parents, in particular the father, and a stepparent may play a more important part in how the child views himself and perceives his own future marital relationship.

### Conclusion

Parental divorce appears to represent two processes; the dissolution of a marriage and the adjustment to a new family structure. In those instances where divorce also indicates the termination of parental conflict, the negative impact of this event on the child proves to be a very narrow generalization. Only the child's trust within



marriage, not the world in general or people in particular, is affected. When parental conflict continues, however, despite the divorce, a more generalized negative view of trust occurs. The faith the child has in peers remains, but their beliefs that the world and people are benevolent are shaken, and they show decreased optimism toward the success of both future relationships and marriage.

Future research, therefore, should not emphasize the objective measure of parents' marital status, but instead concentrate on the more subjective indications of the quality of the parents' relationship with each other. Further exploration is needed to determine more precisely the exact way in which the parental relationship affects the child's perceptions of both the world and marriage. The question of whether it is actual parental conflict or perceived conflict that is influential also should be addressed.

Although this study focused only on the child's retrospective, self-report of the impact of the divorce and the quality of the parents' relationship, and thus may fail to probe as deeply into these issues as an interview, subjects were unaware that parental divorce was the variable of interest until after they had completed all of the trust scales. Thus, though their perceptions about the divorce may have been affected by the passage of time, their reports of their ability to trust should be unbiased

because they had no prior knowledge of the experimenter's hypotheses. These ratings were also compared to an identical group of subjects who were matched to the original subjects on all the demographic variables except parental marital status.

This paper effectively exemplifies how parental divorce affects now-college aged students' intimate relationships. Despite the superficiality of survey responses, these findings indicated that subjects do differ on their projected beliefs about their own marriages, even though over time, their ability to trust in general or in dating relationships is unimpaired. To fully examine the long-term effects of parental divorce on the child's perceptions of marriage, however, the differences between parental marital status should be examined within the context of the child's own marriage. Does the decreased trust in the dependability of the spouse and the diminished optimism regarding the success of this relationship still hold when the subject is actually him or herself married and not just hypothesizing? Or do subjects resolve these issues before they commit to marriage? Because parental divorce is a process involving an adjustment to a new family structure, analyses on how this event affects the child's ability to trust should also be analyzed as a process and measured at several points throughout the child's life. Future research on divorce must also be careful to remove the

confounding variable of high parental conflict before making any conclusions.

## ENDNOTES

1. Subjects also had indicated the seriousness of their present relationship on a single dichotomous variable. These ratings were analyzed in a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  (gender by parents' marital status by serious) ANOVA. For all subjects, those who considered their present relationship serious ( $n=62$ ) acknowledged having greater trust in their partner as a boyfriend/girlfriend than those who were not serious ( $33.77$  vs.  $39.94$ ,  $F(1,54)=7.81$ ,  $p<.01$ ). No significant interactions were found.

2. The high conflict divorce group consists of 6 females and 7 males. All but one subject indicated that it had been several years since their parents divorce. The time since divorce ranged from 6 to 14 years.

## APPENDIX A

### Survey

Using up to 10 traits, please write down the traits or characteristics that best describe one of your female friends.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Using up to 10 traits, please write down the traits or characteristics that best describe one of your male friends.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Using up to 10 traits, please write down the traits or characteristics that best describe yourself.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Using up to 10 traits, please write down the traits or characteristics that best describe another male friend.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



Using up to 10 traits, please write down the traits or characteristics that best describe another female friend.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

- |       | 1   | 2          | 3        | 4        | 5          | 6        |
|-------|---|------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
|       | strongly  | moderately | slightly | slightly | moderately | strongly |
|       | disagree  | disagree   | disagree | agree    | agree      | agree    |
| — 1.  | Misfortune is least likely to strike worthy, decent people.                   |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 2.  | People are naturally unfriendly and unkind.                                   |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 3.  | Bad events are distributed to people at random.                               |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 4.  | Human nature is basically good.   |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 5.  | The good things that happen in this world far outnumber the bad.              |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 6.  | The course of our lives is largely determined by chance.                      |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 7.  | Generally, people deserve what they get in this world.                        |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 8.  | I often think I am no good at all.  |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 9.  | There is more good than evil in the world.                                    |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 10. | I am basically a lucky person.  |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 11. | People's misfortunes result from mistakes they have made.                     |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 12. | People don't really care what happens to the next person.                     |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 13. | I usually behave in ways that are likely to maximize good results for me.     |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 14. | People will experience good fortune if they themselves are good.              |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 15. | Life is too full of uncertainties that are determined by chance.              |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 16. | When I think about it, I consider myself very lucky.                          |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 17. | I almost always make an effort to prevent bad things from happening to me.    |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 18. | I have a low opinion of myself.   |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 19. | By and large, good people get what they deserve in this world.                |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 20. | Through our actions we can prevent bad things from happening to us.           |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 21. | Looking at my life, I realize that chance events have worked out well for me. |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 22. | If people took preventive actions, most misfortune could be avoided.          |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 23. | I take the actions necessary to protect myself against misfortune.            |            |          |          |            |          |
| — 24. | In general, life is mostly a gamble   |            |          |          |            |          |

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- 25. The world is a good place.
- 26. People are basically kind and helpful.
- 27. I usually behave so as to bring about the greatest good for me.
- 28. I am very satisfied with the kind of person I am.
- 29. When bad things happen, it is typically because people have not taken the necessary actions to protect themselves.
- 30. If you look closely enough, you will see that the world is full of goodness.
- 31. I have reason to be ashamed of my personal character.
- 32. I am luckier than most people.
- 33. People are trustworthy.
- 34. People who run big companies don't care about those who work for them.
- 35. People are pleased if they see someone happy.
- 36. When someone says something complimentary about you it is because they want to get something from you.
- 37. Businessmen are honest.
- 38. People don't care what happens to other people.
- 39. The way to get on in life is to be cooperative and friendly.
- 40. People will take advantage of you if you work with them.
- 41. People are basically unselfish.
- 42. People are unwilling to make sacrifices for the sake of others.
- 43. People will be helpful to you if you are helpful to them.
- 44. Given the opportunity, people are dishonest.
- 45. Bosses do their best for the people who work for them.
- 46. People enjoy hearing about other people's failures .
- 47. In order to get anything worthwhile done you have to cooperate with people.
- 48. People are unsympathetic to anyone who is unhappy.
- 49. People are honest.
- 50. The way to succeed is to disregard other people.
- 51. People will be kind to you if you are kind to them.
- 52. It is natural for people to be nasty to each other.

Imagine that you are in your first year of marriage. Please respond as realistically as possible as to what extent you would disagree/agree with the following statements about your partner.

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- \_\_\_ 53. My partner has proven to be trustworthy and I am willing to let him/her engage in activities which other partners find too threatening.
- \_\_\_ 54. Even when I don't know how my partner will react, I feel comfortable telling him/her anything about myself; even those things of which I am ashamed.
- \_\_\_ 55. Though times may change and the future is uncertain; I know my partner will always be ready and willing to offer me strength and support.
- \_\_\_ 56. I am never certain that my partner won't do something that I dislike or will embarrass me.
- \_\_\_ 57. My partner is very unpredictable. I never know how he/she is going to act from one day to the next.
- \_\_\_ 58. I feel very uncomfortable when my partner has to make decisions which will affect me personally.
- \_\_\_ 59. I have found that my partner is unusually dependable, especially when it comes to things which are important to me.
- \_\_\_ 60. My partner behaves in a very consistent manner.
- \_\_\_ 61. Whenever we have to make an important decision in a situation we have never encountered before I know my partner will be concerned about my welfare.
- \_\_\_ 62. Even if I have no reason to expect my partner to share things with me, I still feel certain that he/she will.
- \_\_\_ 63. I can rely on my partner to react in a positive way when I expose my weaknesses to him/her.
- \_\_\_ 64. When I share my problems with my partner, I know he/she will respond in a loving way even before I say anything.
- \_\_\_ 65. I am certain that my partner would not cheat on me, even if the opportunity arose and there was no chance that he/she would get caught.
- \_\_\_ 66. I sometimes avoid my partner because he/she is unpredictable and I fear saying or doing something which might create conflict.
- \_\_\_ 67. I can rely on my partner to keep the promises he/she makes to me.
- \_\_\_ 68. When I am with my partner I feel secure in facing unknown new situations.

- 69. Even when my partner makes excuses which sound rather unlikely, I am confident that he (she) is telling the truth.

Respond to these statements with respect to your present partner. If you are not presently dating someone, please imagine you are in a serious dating relationship and respond accordingly.

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- 70. My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare.
- 71. There are times when my partner cannot be trusted.
- 72. My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.
- 73. I feel that I can trust my partner completely.
- 74. My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises.
- 75. I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration.
- 76. My partner treats me fairly and justly.
- 77. I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.
- 78. Long-term intimate relationships are not very important to me.

Now indicate to what extent you disagree/agree with the following statements about your best friend.

- 79. My best friend is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare.
- 80. There are times when my best friend cannot be trusted.
- 81. My best friend is perfectly honest and truthful with me.
- 82. I feel that I can trust my best friend completely.
- 83. My best friend is truly sincere in his (her) promises.
- 84. I feel that my best friend does not show me enough consideration.
- 85. My best friend treats me fairly and justly.
- 86. I feel that my best friend can be counted on to help me.

— 87. Friendships are very important to me.

Please circle the number that best corresponds to your response to each of the following questions.

88. How confident are you that you will have successful love relationships in the future?

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

89. Do you want to get married in the future? \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

90. How likely is it that you will get married?

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

91. How likely is it that you will have a successful marriage?

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

92. How likely is it that you will get divorce sometime in your life?

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

93. In general, how optimistic do you feel about the success of your love relationships in the future?

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4



Respond to these statements with respect to your mother (i.e. your biological mother) as you were growing up.

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- \_\_\_ 94. My mother was primarily interested in her own welfare.
- \_\_\_ 95. There were times when my mother could not be trusted.
- \_\_\_ 96. My mother was perfectly honest and truthful with me.
- \_\_\_ 97. While growing up, I felt that I could trust my mother completely.
- \_\_\_ 98. My mother was truly sincere in her promises.
- \_\_\_ 99. While growing up, I felt that my mother did not show me enough consideration.
- \_\_\_ 100. My mother treated me fairly and justly.
- \_\_\_ 101. While growing up, I felt that my mother could be counted on to help me.

Now respond to these statements with respect to your father (i.e. your biological father) as you were growing up.

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- \_\_\_ 102. My father was primarily interested in his own welfare.
- \_\_\_ 103. There were times when my father could not be trusted.
- \_\_\_ 104. My father was perfectly honest and truthful with me.
- \_\_\_ 105. While growing up, I felt that I could trust my father completely.
- \_\_\_ 106. My father was truly sincere in his promises.
- \_\_\_ 107. While growing up, I felt that my father did not show me enough consideration.
- \_\_\_ 108. My father treated me fairly and justly.
- \_\_\_ 109. While growing up, I felt that my father could be counted on to help me.

Respond to these statements with respect to how you feel your mother (i.e. your biological mother) viewed your father (i.e. your biological father) while you were growing up. Remember we are interested in your parents' perceptions of each other during the period of time while you were growing up.

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- \_\_\_ 110. My mother felt that my father was primarily interested in his own welfare.
- \_\_\_ 111. There were times when my mother felt that my father could not be trusted.
- \_\_\_ 112. My mother felt that my father was perfectly honest and truthful with her.
- \_\_\_ 113. My mother felt that she could trust my father completely.
- \_\_\_ 114. My mother felt that my father was truly sincere in his promises.
- \_\_\_ 115. My mother felt that my father did not show her enough consideration.
- \_\_\_ 116. My mother felt that my father treated her fairly and justly.
- \_\_\_ 117. My mother felt that my father could be counted on to help her.

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as to how you feel your father (i.e. biological father) viewed your mother (i.e. biological mother) while you were growing up.

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- \_\_\_ 118. My father felt that my mother was primarily interested in her own welfare.
- \_\_\_ 119. There were times when my father felt that my mother could not be trusted.
- \_\_\_ 120. My father felt that my mother was perfectly honest and truthful with him.
- \_\_\_ 121. My father felt that he could trust my mother completely.
- \_\_\_ 125. My father felt that my mother was truly sincere in her promises.
- \_\_\_ 126. My father felt that my mother did not show him enough consideration.
- \_\_\_ 127. My father felt that my mother treated him fairly and justly.
- \_\_\_ 128. My father felt that my mother could be counted on to help him.

Finally some background information.

GENDER: MALE \_\_\_\_\_ FEMALE \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADUATING CLASS: 88 89 90 91 other

RELIGION: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think you have a strong religious affiliation? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

RACE: \_\_\_\_\_

MARITAL STATUS: single \_\_\_\_\_ married \_\_\_\_\_ separated \_\_\_\_\_ divorced \_\_\_\_\_

Are you presently dating someone? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how long have you been dating this person? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider this a serious relationship? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

How many serious relationships have you had in the past? \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Number of brothers: (give ages) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of sisters: (give ages) \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you mostly live while you were growing up:

rural or country area \_\_\_\_\_ small town \_\_\_\_\_ small city \_\_\_\_\_  
suburb of a city \_\_\_\_\_ large city \_\_\_\_\_ other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Level of education:

High school or less

Some college

College graduate

Beyond college

Mother

Father

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are your parents: married \_\_\_\_\_ separated \_\_\_\_\_ divorced \_\_\_\_\_  
widow/widower \_\_\_\_\_

If your parents are married:

I believe my parents are happily married.

not at all      somewhat      moderately      very      extremely  
0                      1                      2                      3                      4

I believe there is a great deal of conflict in my parents' marriage.

not at all      somewhat      moderately      very      extremely  
0                      1                      2                      3                      4

If your parents are divorced, please answer the questions on the following pages. In all cases, the custodial parent refers to the parent you have lived with since the divorce, and the non-custodial parent refers to the parent you have not lived with post-divorce.

Who was your custodial parent after the divorce? \_\_\_\_\_

What was your age at the time of the divorce? \_\_\_\_\_

Did your custodial parent remarry? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how many years after the divorce did s/he remarry? \_\_\_\_\_

How close do you feel to your step-parent?

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

I believe there is a great deal of conflict in my custodial parent's marriage.

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

Shortly after the divorce, I talked to my non-custodial parent (on the phone or in person) approximately \_\_\_\_\_. (circle one)

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 0) once a day    | 5) 4 times a year        |
| 1) twice a week  | 6) three times a year    |
| 2) once a week   | 7) twice a year          |
| 3) twice a month | 8) once a year           |
| 4) once a month  | 9) less than once a year |

Shortly after the divorce, I saw my non-custodial parent approximately \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 0) once a day    | 5) 4 times a year        |
| 1) twice a week  | 6) three times a year    |
| 2) once a week   | 7) twice a year          |
| 3) twice a month | 8) once a year           |
| 4) once a month  | 9) less than once a year |

I would rate my relationship with my non-custodial parent as:

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
good	good	good	good	good
0	1	2	3	4

Prior to my biological parents' divorce, there was a great deal of conflict in their relationship.

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

In the few years following my biological parents' divorce, there was a great deal of conflict in their relationship.

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

Presently, there is a great deal of conflict in my biological parents' relationship.

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

We are interested in the extent to which you feel the divorce had an impact on you for the year or so following the divorce. Please indicate the extent to which the divorce had an impact on you at that time.

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

Please indicate the extent to which you feel the divorce has an impact on you presently.

not at all	somewhat	moderately	very	extremely
0	1	2	3	4

We are interested in your feelings about yourself and others at three points in time: before your parents' divorce, during the year directly following the divorce, and now. To indicate your feelings before the divorce place the number "1" along the line. Place a "2" along the line to indicate your feelings during the year following the divorce, and place a "3" for how you feel presently. Place your numbers to the right or left of the diagonal lines to indicate the negative/positive extent of your feelings. We are particularly interested in any changes in your feelings over time. Please indicate along the continuum your feelings at these three points in time with regards to each of the listed individuals. If your feelings did not change over the time involved, please place the numbers on top of each other. Be sure to indicate your feelings at all three points in time.

How you feel about yourself

very positive ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— very negative  
 some- slight- neutral slight- some-  
 what ly ly what

How you feel about other people

very positive ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— very negative  
 some- slight- neutral slight- some-  
 what ly ly what

How you feel about your mother

very positive ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— very negative  
 some- slight- neutral slight- some-  
 what ly ly what

How you feel about your father

very positive ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— very negative  
 some- slight- neutral slight- some-  
 what ly ly what

How you feel about women in general

very positive ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— very negative  
 some- slight- neutral slight- some-  
 what ly ly what

How you feel about men in general

very positive ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— / ——— very negative  
 some- slight- neutral slight- some-  
 what ly ly what



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